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Reverend Mariano Maller, C.M.
DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archive

American Vincentians in 1877-1878: The Maller Visitation Report (1)

EDITED AND TRANSLATED

BY

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M.

Introduction

James Knowd, C.M., wrote to the superior general, Eugene Boré, in July 1876, complaining of problems which the province was facing.¹ At age seventy-one, Knowd was a senior member of the American province and was writing in his capacity as a provincial consultor. His letter and those written by others doubtless moved the superior gen-

¹Knowd to Boré, from Germantown, 8 July 1876. Original in Archives of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission (hereinafter AGCCM); microfilm copy, reel 3, #30.

eral and his council to order a lengthy review of the apostolates and community life of their American confreres. To conduct this review, called an "extraordinary visitation," Boré selected Mariano Joachim Maller, the visitor (provincial superior) of Spain. One of the main obligations of any visitor is to conduct the ordinary visitations of the houses and members of his province. However, since James Rolando, the American visitor, had allegedly not managed American Vincentians well, a special or extraordinary visitation seemed called for.²

The American Vincentian province which Maller was to visit numbered approximately eighty priests and thirty-five brothers, with about ten novices and twenty scholastics. These priests and brothers lived and worked in thirteen community houses. Discounting the three most populous houses, Germantown, Cape Girardeau and Niagara, the usual Vincentian community counted about five members. The average age of the priests was young, about forty, with the median age being thirty-eight.³ By comparison with other provinces in the Congregation of the Mission, the American province was the fourth largest after Paris, Rome and Lombardy. In terms of the totals of novices and scholastics, it was second, after Paris.⁴ Further, in terms of the number of houses, the American province was the largest. Any systemic problems in such a young, large and diversified province clearly merited investigation.⁵

In his annual circular letter to the members of the Congregation of 1878, the superior general described Maller's mission then underway. "The worthy visitor of the province of Spain, Father Maller, has been briefly taken by us to go to visit the large province of the United States. He knows it thoroughly, since formerly he contributed in large mea-

²The appointment of such a visitor, called a "commissary," was provided for in the constitutions, in the section dealing with the powers of the superior general. See "Constitutiones quae ad Superiorem Generalem totius Congregationis Missionis gubernationem spectant," in *Collectio Bullarum, Constitutionum ac Decretorum quae Congregationis administrationem spectant* (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1847) ch. 1, sect. 4: 2, p. 5.

³As is often the case with Vincentian records, it is difficult to be precise about the identities of the brothers. One of the advantages of Maller's report is his fairly complete listing of the brothers for each house. The identities of some other brothers have been given on the basis of other records. Nevertheless, the list remains incomplete.

⁴This figure is somewhat deceiving, since Paris' reported total of thirty-one novices and ninety-seven scholastics, when divided among the eight French provinces, which reported none, averages only fifteen, half the American total.

⁵These figures are taken from those reported in *Catalogue des maisons et du personnel de la Congrégation de la Mission* (Paris: 1877). The totals, while perhaps deficient in some ways, are reliable at least as indicators of relative positions.

sure to its establishment. But, before crossing the Atlantic, he was asked to visit our houses in England and Ireland."⁶

This publication of Maller's report is intended to contribute to an understanding of American Vincentians in the nineteenth century: who they were, how they lived, the personal and institutional problems they encountered, and, more importantly, what their values and interests were. Maller's lengthy report is unique in the insights and information it gives in a period of American Vincentian life otherwise not well documented. Much good information has come down from the earliest pioneer period, especially in the letters and diaries of Felix De Andreis, Joseph Rosati, John Timon, and John Mary Odin. Nonetheless, Maller's unvarnished and sometimes startling accounts of the American character and real Vincentian life have the ring of truth about them, even for today.

Who was Mariano Maller?⁷ Boré's choice as his delegate was born of working-class parents on 4 September 1817 in Selgua, in the diocese of Lérida, Spain. With the encouragement of his parents, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in Madrid, 23 June 1833. In July of that year, the government suppressed the Congregation in Spain, so young Mariano went first to the community house in Barcelona, where he made his vows 29 June 1835, and then to the motherhouse in Paris, where he studied theology and received minor orders.

Maller came to the United States in 1839, while still a deacon. Soon after his ordination in Louisiana on 22 March 1840, he went to the Barrens to begin his priestly ministry. The responsibilities which began to be entrusted to him testify to the esteem others had for his talents. In 1841, at age twenty-four, he became head of Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia. Four years later, Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia named Maller his vicar general, making him second in rank only to the bishop. This dignity did not last long, since in 1846 Maller transferred to Saint Vincent's College, Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

In the following year, 1847, when the American visitor, John Timon, became the first bishop of Buffalo, the authorities in Paris tapped Maller to succeed Timon as visitor. Even during his assign-

⁶*Recueil des principales circulaires des supérieurs généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 3 vols. (Paris: Georges Chamerot, 1880), 3: 562.

⁷"Notice sur M. Joachim-Marien Maller," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 59 (1874): 71-78. Another brief notice is in *Centenario de los Padres Paúles en Madrid* (Madrid: 1928), 144-45.

ment in Philadelphia, Maller had asked to be relieved as rector because of health problems. When he was named visitor, he also begged off, but gradually came to accept his new responsibilities. Sometime in the spring of 1848, at age thirty-one, he overcame his hesitation and succeeded Timon, serving approximately to the end of December, 1850.

During 1849, Maller helped to finalize the negotiations for the union of the Sisters of Charity of Mother Seton with the Daughters of Charity in Paris. These involved travel to Paris for discussions with Jean-Baptiste Étienne, the Vincentian superior general, inasmuch as he was also the superior general of the Daughters of Charity. The union with France took place officially on 25 March 1850, and Maller became the first provincial director of the Daughters of Charity.

In that same year, however, it became known that Bishop John J. Hughes of New York had nominated Maller as one of three candidates for the diocese of Monterey in California. Because of his abilities and solid reputation, it was rumored that Maller might be nominated for some other see if he did not become bishop of Monterey.⁸ On this account, he requested the superior general to transfer him away from the United States.

The superior general acceded, sending Maller to Brazil in 1853 as visitor and director of the Daughters of Charity there. Stephen Vincent Ryan, American visitor from 1857 to 1868, said of Maller: "The departure of Father Maller I regarded almost an irreparable loss to myself and to our Province. He was a man of talent, learning, good judgment and a genuine religious spirit. On him I relied, perhaps too much, for the future direction of myself and the important works of the Community."⁹ Maller remained in Brazil as visitor until 1858.

After a year in Paris, he arrived back in his native Spain as visitor in 1862, where he guided the Congregation through more revolutionary times. Continuing his major responsibilities, in 1877 and 1878, at age sixty, he spent nearly twelve months visiting the provinces of Ireland and America.¹⁰

⁸Maller had been second on Hughes' list, after Joseph S. Alemany, O.P., who became bishop of Monterey.

⁹*Three Centuries of Vincentian Missionary Labors, 1617-1917, and Centenary of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States* (Philadelphia: Miraculous Medal Association, 1917), 105-06. Bishop Ryan delivered an address, "Early Lazarist Missions and Missionaries," 8 May 1887, which was reprinted in this volume.

¹⁰A brief account of Maller's visit to Ireland and England appeared in *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 43 (1878): 222-29; it was a letter of Maller to Jules Chevalier, from Lanark, Scotland, 28 April 1877. By contrast, no such account of his much longer American visit appeared in print.

The chronology of his visitation developed as follows. After a review on 31 December 1876¹¹ of the various complaints against Vincentians in the United States, Boré could report to his council on 2 April 1877 that Maller would conduct the visits. Maller arrived in the United States by July and began his visitation in Germantown, Philadelphia, leaving there on 17 July.¹² From there he traveled to Vincentian houses in Baltimore and Emmitsburg, where he also took time to give a retreat to the Daughters of Charity. Although some records are lacking, he probably next made his visit to Brooklyn (which he dates to October 1877), and then turned to Saint Louis, Perryville (17-20 November), and eventually to Cape Girardeau (21 November-1 December). From Missouri he traveled south to New Orleans. He left there in late January to visit his Spanish confreres in Cuba, probably because they continued to be juridically members of his home province in Spain. Maller must have returned to New Orleans, since he made his visit to La Salle, Illinois, on 3-4 April 1878, most likely on his way to Chicago and then to Niagara. He returned to Germantown, and left the United States on 15 May 1878. There is no record of his participation in a meeting of the provincial council to review his report. Neither do the minutes of the provincial assembly, held 1-4 July, reflect any of the concerns raised by Maller.¹³

Maller presented his report on the American Vincentians in two sections. The first, in the form of a letter, is dated 16 July 1877. He wrote it after his visit to the central house in Germantown. The second, and longer, section, he completed after his return to Paris. This bears the date 11 June 1878. The first section consists of six numbered pages on twelve sheets of stationery, written in Maller's hand. The second, likewise written by Maller, contains forty-nine numbered pages in a bound notebook.¹⁴

¹¹[Félix Contassot, C.M. comp.] "La Congrégation de la Mission en Amérique du Nord. Notes pour servir à son histoire, ou, Extraits des *Registres du Grand Conseil* de la Congrégation" (Rome: 1966); typescript in De Andreis-Rosati Memorial Archives (hereinafter DRMA), entry for 31 December 1876.

¹²Maller attended the provincial council meeting of 9 July, and made the following recommendations: "He warmly urged the necessity of establishing another Band of Missionaries. Spoke of the manner in which vacations are spent. The abuses which exist in that respect, & that they should be corrected at any cost. He also advocated the appointing of a board of examiners in outside seminaries to examine the qualifications of subjects for the Community." "Register of the Deliberations of the Council of the Province," ms. in the provincial archives, Philadelphia, p. 47.

¹³The only issue of note was a decision against a division of the province (untitled register of provincial assemblies, 1843-1919, in archives of Eastern Province).

¹⁴The originals are both in the Archives of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome, files of the American province, entitled "Pars antiqua (ante 1915), Stat. Foeder. Americae, VIII-2, Dossier, 'USA. Maller-Visites 1877-78,'" and are available on microfilm: section one is on Reel 3, #39, and section two, Reel 1, #192.

Toward the end of Maller's visitation, Eugene Boré, the superior general whose commissary Maller was, died. The date was 3 May 1878, just before the conclusion of the visitation. The result was that Maller lost his commission, juridically speaking, but he still addressed his final document to Boré's successor, Antoine Fiat. In his last annual circular, mentioned above, Boré presented a highly sanitized version of his commissary's visit. His remarks were based on Maller's Section One, as well as on other letters which he wrote to Boré in the interim.

Let us follow Father Maller to the United States. He witnesses to the love of vocation there among the confreres, to devotion and patience in their works which enormous distances make even more difficult. Since the various houses are also parishes, with the exception of Niagara and Los Angeles, which have been established as colleges [boarding high schools] it necessarily follows that there are few workers left for the missions, understood in the first meaning of that word. The pastoral ministry and teaching in seminaries or in schools absorbs the time and the strength of the available personnel. I know that this lack is understood, and that each confrere wishes to grant an even larger portion to the work which Saint Vincent recommended in preference to all others, when this is possible and able to be realized.

After receiving the final report, dated 11 June 1878, Fiat invited Maller to the general council session of 17 June. The minutes of that session are more revealing than the bland paragraph which Boré published for general community reading:

He [Maller] drew the attention of the Council to several main points, some of which are grave; (1) the debts of the province are enormous; (2) the weakness of the visitor, who is incapable because of his hesitancy to lead such a large province. Father Maller proposed Father Fitzgerald as the one with the most good qualities. The good regulation of finances will depend on the firmness and wisdom of the visitor. The seminary [novitiate] needs reform. The one to do this seems to be Father Rolando. The pipe and the custom of smoking have been generally estab-

lished, despite the prohibition issued by the general assembly of 1861.¹⁵

Fiat's report on his American confreres in his annual New Year's circular letter for 1879 is a marvel of understatement and innuendo. "The missionaries of the United States enjoy the esteem of the bishops and the confidence of the people. The many parishes which they have had to accept keep them from devoting themselves, as much as would be desired, to our principal work, missions. Yet, the frequent conversions of which they are the instruments partially compensate for this privation, and witness to the usefulness of their ministry."¹⁶

Fiat and his councilors continued to discuss the matter of replacing James Rolando. They finally chose Thomas Smith. Although Smith opposed their changing Rolando, he accepted the office of visitor as of 21 February 1879. Following the suggestion made by Maller, Smith then appointed Rolando in turn to direct the novitiate in Germantown.

It is unknown what impact Maller's visitation had on the life of the American province. It can be supposed, however, that, following normal procedures, the remarks and ordinances made during a visitation would be read publicly every three months, and his American confreres would continue to remain aware of the issues he raised in them. As personnel changed in the houses, however, the issues which individual Vincentians occasioned must gradually have changed as well, rendering moot many of Maller's observations.¹⁷

Judging from the accuracy of the dates, names, and places in the report, we may conclude that Maller presented a careful picture. The few divergences that occur have been noted below. As to Vincentian apostolates and community life, the trends and issues he highlighted appear to have been fairly normal in the United States at that period, if one is to judge from other historical works on the life of the Congregation of the Mission.

Because of its length, this report is presented in two sections, the first in this number of *Vincentian Heritage*, and the second in a subsequent issue.

¹⁵Contassot, "Notes pour servir," 41.

¹⁶Printed circular, dated 1 January 1879; copy in DRMA.

¹⁷Where Maller's remarks and ordinances for individual houses have been found, these have been appended to his formal report. Each is in his own hand, and was written in English.

Section I

Visit of Father Maller

Emmitsburg, 16 July 1877.

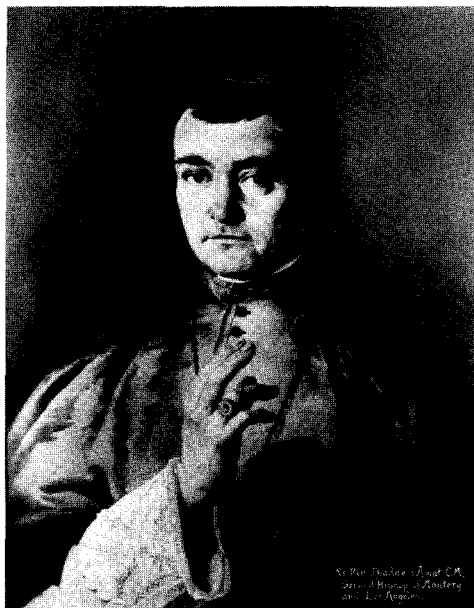
Most Honored Father, your blessing please.

After having visited the house of Germantown which is, as you know, the central house of the province of the United States, I left Philadelphia on the thirteenth. I stayed only two days at Baltimore, and I arrived here this morning. I have been received as I do not deserve. I am completely unnerved, and I tremble because they have such an exaggerated idea that I do not know what will happen as a result. Everybody is anxious about whether I am going to adopt their point of view, but this is impossible because their suppositions differ so. Also, those with the suppositions seem so little disposed to give way that I do not know what will result from it. It could be that I will finish by angering both parties and by quarreling with everyone. I do not wish yet to let myself have any fixed idea. I have already come to know a great deal, but there remains still more to learn. I pray God to enlighten me and I am asking prayers for that. I will not, therefore, say more at this moment. I am going to speak to you rather about Germantown and about the visit of that house which I finished on the tenth of this month.¹⁸

Divine providence permitted the congregation to be put in charge of the direction of the seminary in Philadelphia. We continued to fulfill that responsibility for twelve years, that is from 1841 to 1853. Our confrere, Father [Thaddeus] Amat, who was its superior, had been elevated to the episcopal dignity.¹⁹ The provincial [Anthony Penco] declared that he had no one to replace him as superior, a responsibility that he had held for six years. As a result, they left the seminary. The same divine providence, however, had also foreseen that the superiors and confreres of the seminary, foreseeing that this might happen one day and that then the congregation might have to

¹⁸The novitiate diary records for 29 June: "To-day Rev. Fr. Maller, V.C.M. opened the visitation of this Province with an exhortation." The entry for 10 July reads: "To-day Fr. Maller closed the visitation of this house. He pointed out the defects to be corrected and burned publicly in the chapel all papers relating to communication, etc." In burning these papers, Maller was following the standard rule set down for the time of visitations (Ch. 4, 8). It is unknown whether he followed this same practice elsewhere in the province (source: Untitled Novitiate Diary, 1864-1907, Eastern Province Archives, Germantown papers).

¹⁹Thaddeus Amat, C.M. (1811-1878) became bishop of Monterey, California, 29 July 1853, later called Monterey-Los Angeles. He died 12 May 1878 in Los Angeles.



Bishop Thaddeus Amat, C.M.
DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archive

abandon entirely the diocese of Philadelphia, worked hard to obtain a way to continue. They bought [property in] Germantown which was then about two leagues [six miles] from Philadelphia, a property on which through their efforts, and especially through those of Father [Michael] Domenech,²⁰ they built a very beautiful church and a house for three or four confreres. Toward 1865 they decided to transfer from the west²¹ to the east of the United States the central house, the internal seminary, the student house, and the residence of the provincial, and to place that at Germantown. However, the tiny house by the side of the church in Germantown was too small for this, and since the property had been considered somewhat too narrow, they decided to purchase first about eight acres, and then in 1873 they added still another piece of about three acres, altogether making four and a half

²⁰Michael Domenec, C.M. (occasionally spelled Domenech) became bishop of Pittsburgh, 28 September 1860. He resigned his see, then called Allegheny, and died less than six months later in his native Spain, 5 January 1878.

²¹An error; the original reads "from the east."

hectares [approximately eleven acres]. On the property which they purchased was a house which was quite capable of accommodating them, but vocations began to flourish and soon they saw that they would have to build. Consequently, they built the body of the building. This has become the right wing. Then they added a second wing, the central, and only the left wing remains to be built. When everything is finished and well surrounded with walls, the house will not be bad. At this moment, however, it is a little too open to everyone, and this gives the appearance of a dissipation not at all conducive to an ordered life.

The internal seminary is not numerous at this time. There are only four novices. Perhaps at the end of the vacations some more will present themselves there, but it does not seem that the number will be great. There are, as we know, some ups and downs in these matters. The spirit of the seminary seems quite good. Father [Richard] Fitzgerald, the director, is very good, capable and zealous, but he is the assistant of the house and this office gives him too much to do outside the seminary. Besides, he works in the parish. He has been directing two clubs, etc., and all this increases his duties. Lastly, he had been charged with collecting funds to build the public chapel which is to be built next to the central house. All this has resulted in great detriment to the novitiate and the students, whose director he also is. I made this observation to Father [James] Rolando.²² He promised to change things and to give more leisure to Father Fitzgerald to be occupied with the youth. This seemed even more urgent since the vocations were diminishing and the spirit of the young students in particular seemed to leave much to be desired. Almost all the confreres made this observation to me.

I have also had to remark that in admitting young men to the seminary, they are not always well examined to assure their qualities and their resources. The same indulgence had been practiced in admitting novices to holy vows. To remedy the first problem, which seemed to be the gravest and the most frequent, I indicated that it would be good that in the external seminaries from which come the majority of the young people who enter our congregation, confreres should be examiners. They would examine the aspirants and send to

²²James Rolando was visitor from 11 February 1873 to 21 February 1879.

Germantown only those in whom they see marks of a true vocation and the current possession of the required education. Some of these youngsters have been students in our colleges or seminaries in view of their vocation, such as at Castleknock in Ireland or at the Berceau of Saint Vincent in France, and they regret spending one added year, as if this could compare with the good or the evil that might result for the congregation from the good or bad choice of vocations. I also recommended that they examine the candidates again at Germantown and send away without pity those who would not give satisfaction. Father Rolando gave this information to the local superiors and already one or two who had four or five of these young people to send before the next semester have declared that they would keep them one year longer.

I said that the students leave much to be desired as far as spirit is concerned and even more as far as the form or what they call style, which is too unceremonious and has such a secular air. It is true that this is generally so among the clergy and very common among our priest confreres. To be unceremonious, to have this worldly and dissipated air is something I have always remarked in America, but it seems to me that it has increased in these last twenty-five years. In previous times the majority of the priests wore a short cassock, now I see only the one that I wear myself. Neither confreres nor secular priests, not even bishops, wear it anymore and I am the *only one* to be seen. I suppose that it is on the occasion of the civil war that that has been abandoned, but I do not understand why they did not take it up again. There is nothing at all inconvenient in wearing it. It has not caused me the smallest inconvenience or disagreement.

Coming back to our students, I am angry to have to tell you that there does not exist among them either a cordial union or tender piety, nor the blind obedience which should be expected among our students. Besides the very many great occupations of the director, Father Fitzgerald, one must perhaps also attribute this to the example of certain confreres whom the visitor keeps at the central house because he does not know where else to assign them, and hopes to use them all the while preserving their vocation. I believe that this system is pitiful. I have advised Father Rolando to send them away and to keep only edifying confreres near these young people. The form of the house, which is still unfinished and open on all sides, (there are, I believe, nine doors) can also contribute to this spirit of dissipation. Besides, another cause which contributes without doubt is that almost

all the students are employed more or less in teaching in a kind of high school or external school which they have next to the house. When I spoke about this to the provincial he told me that a certain confrere would not allow the closure of this little insignificant affair. I told him that what he had to do first was to remove this gentleman from the central house where his example, without being positively bad, was not good enough. He told me also that the studies were weak, which is not surprising to me after what I just said.

Among the priests there is not yet enough union or cordiality. There are antipathies, perhaps aversions, which are badly restrained, not enough love for regularity. They do not care for these little things. They say very easily, "what evil is there in this?" They search for the comfortable, and the agreeable seems to be the rule. They seem to have forgotten the spirit of mortification and humility. Under the pretext that we are not in Europe and that we are not in the past centuries, they justify softness and the search for sensual satisfactions which are sometimes criminal, as if the gospel had changed. No one supports these ideas, but there is a little of this among the Americans and even among the Europeans who have been here for a long time. Their ideas are not a little bit tainted with this modern and particularly American hue.

Here now is my opinion and what I have heard about each confrere in particular.

Father [James] Rolando, the visitor. He is a man of God according to the general opinion. There are those who attribute to him the weakness of loving his office too much and a little bit of jealousy, but I do not believe it. He is full of piety, and has good and various healthy ideas about matters in general and he tries to do good, but he is incapable of a firm resolution. He is always hesitant, letting things go for fear of having to battle the opposition. I attended a provincial council meeting. Truly it was pitiful. This incertitude and indecision in ideas and in particular cases surpasses words. To use the words of an old European confrere whom I esteem greatly, "the confreres only put me to sleep." He does not command the respect of his subjects. They do not believe him at all and this causes great problems because I fear that they have become accustomed to having little respect for his intentions and even with his orders. With all this I do not believe that it would be right to change him because I do not see anyone at all who could take his place. I will come back to this later after I have run through the province and I have seen and understood everyone.

Joseph Alizeri (born 1822, vocation 1846). Very good spirit, very regular, a little conceited, formal. He seems to have a problem with Father Fitzgerald who responds to him the same way. The two of them are taken up one against the other. Both of them are perhaps correct, since each one complains from his point of view and does not see that the faults of the others will lead logically to their own consequences. Poor human nature! He is sub-assistant and professor of theology. In this responsibility he acquits himself well because he is capable. He is capable of being superior. He was ready to be asked for this, I suppose. He does not seem to me to be too conciliatory despite his tendency to regard everything modern as good. He enjoys good health and is firm in his vocation.²³

William Ryan (born 1831, vocation 1849). He is the brother of Bishop [Stephen Vincent] Ryan, the bishop of Buffalo. He has a poor spirit and very mediocre talents. They keep him in the central house because of his penchant for drinking. He is conducting himself well at the moment but it is sad that he cannot be exposed to danger without some worry. He enjoys a good health. (Afterwards he lost his mind.)²⁴

James MacGill (1831, 1849). Good spirit, good heart, good health, a fervent missionary. Of very moderate means, he is not always prudent in his words and is somewhat exaggerated, nevertheless he does much good by his simplicity and kindness. He has been imperious and they did well to remove him from power. He has no feel for it. An excellent vocation.²⁵

John Monahan (1796, 1850). An elderly, infirm, paralytic completing his days on the earth. He edifies everyone. (He died afterwards.)²⁶

Thomas O'Donoghue (1838, 1855). I did not meet him. You have seen him without doubt in Paris.²⁷

Theophile Landry (1839, 1855). Not precisely a bad spirit, but not good either. He is a young confrere full of talents and means. He loves study and teaching in all the natural sciences but he wastes his good qualities through a temperament which is changeable, even capricious. He is hotheaded, susceptible, morose, and quiet, but candid. They had made him superior but he insisted that he get out of this and

²³Joseph Alizeri died 7 August 1893.

²⁴William A. Ryan died 4 November 1903, as a psychiatric patient in Mount Hope, Baltimore.

²⁵James MacGill became the first provincial of the Eastern Province, 4 September 1888, a post he filled until 21 October 1909. He died 18 May 1911.

²⁶John Monaghan died 27 September 1877. He was the oldest member of the province at the time of Maller's visit.

²⁷Thomas M. O'Donoghue died 24 March 1908.

that had to happen. I fear for his vocation. It will not stand up against strong opposition. He is the one who more than anyone else has maintained the little high school next to the house because he loves to be involved there. His example has not had the best effect for our students, as Father Rolando is convinced. (He is no longer at Germantown but at Niagara.)²⁸

Richard Fitzgerald (1833, 1859). Quite a good spirit, zealous, hard working, regular, with good judgment. He is the assistant of the house; however, he has an antipathy towards Father Alizeri. He is the director of the novices and the students. He is quite capable of these two jobs, but he has to be given the time as I have said above in speaking of the seminarians and the students in general. He succeeds well in the work of the parish as well as in giving retreats to sisters. Perhaps he is too sweet. He has an attractive manner with persons of the opposite sex, without my wishing to imply the least evil penchant for this. It is certain that he is sought out by Sisters, the Children of Mary, pious women etc.²⁹

John Lamey (1844, 1860). Not a good spirit, a lightweight, with no visible piety. He is careful of his body and inclined to drink, knows nothing of mortification. They do not dare expose him to danger and they watch him in the hope of getting rid of him, and his example is dangerous for youth. He will wind up by quitting his vocation or by being sent away from the congregation. He has more than ordinary talents and could be very useful, but he would need a superior of rare prudence and capable of winning him. I do not know such a person in this province. He spoke to me of changing provinces and perhaps if he were sent away he would reform, but alas *Caelum non animum mutat* ["not even being in heaven can change a person's character"].³⁰

Sylvester Haire (1846, 1864). He is the local and provincial procurator, with poor health and very moderate talents. He enjoys a very remarkable aptitude for his office. Nevertheless he did not have his financial records in good condition and since he was unable to show them to me, he promised to fix them as soon as possible. I got him to

²⁸Theophile Landry died 25 May 1899.

²⁹Richard J. Fitzgerald died 16 December 1891.

³⁰John J. Lamey died in the Congregation, 11 August 1878, shortly after the conclusion of the visitation.

agree not to let a month pass without checking the accounts and showing his books to the superior and the assistant because of his health and his timidity. I do not think that he is capable of any other office than procurator.³¹

There is another Father Callahan, Peter (1848, 1869) whom I do not know³² and Father [John] Murray, likewise, (1851, 1870). They were both absent.³³

There are twenty-three students, four novices, and seven brothers. These last are good, some are very good. I cannot explain to you the financial state of the house inasmuch as the procurator was unable to communicate it to me. In general he seems very satisfied because, although they have some debts, it seems that others owe them more. As soon as I get information about the state of the province in general I will present the details on the subject to you.

The new house, such as it is, cost about 250,000 francs [\$10,000]. What still remains to do will cost 175,000 [\$7000] or 200,000 francs [\$8000]. The chapel will soon be finished. It will cost, I think, from 150,000 [\$6000] to 200,000 francs [\$8000], but everything will happen by means of the collections among the faithful, and there is no reason to worry ourselves about this.

Next to the church [Saint Vincent's] which Father Domenech had built about twenty years ago, we have a little house with three confreres. Here are their names and their qualities, but first I will tell you that the church is a parish church and that our confreres acquit themselves of all their duties as pastors. They have had very good relationships with the archbishop [James F. Wood] and generally are much esteemed by the faithful. Our confreres of the other house help them in several ways.

Father James Knowd (1805, 1842). A good spirit, regular, with good, solid judgment. He is a provincial consultor. His health and his age do not allow us to hope for a much longer time for him.³⁴

David Kenrick (1833, 1845). A good spirit, moderate talents, good for what he does, namely the work of the parish.³⁵

³¹Sylvester V. Haire died 9 June 1913.

³²Rolando asked for a dismissal for Peter Callahan, which was granted 8 January 1877 by the General Council. The alleged reason was his inclination to drink. His dismissal papers arrived and the provincial council decided at the meeting of 13 August 1877 that he should be formally removed (Register, Provincial Council, p. 48).

³³John J. Murray died 7 June 1934. Maller also omitted mention of Peter V. Byrne, listed in the 1877 and 1878 personnel catalogues as a member of the Germantown house. Byrne died 15 July 1932.

³⁴James Knowd died 28 March 1880.

³⁵David W. Kenrick died 31 January 1903.



Bishop Michael Domenech, C.M.
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Pius Creutz or Kreutz (1830, 1870). A good spirit, quite capable, very beloved among his companions. Good health.³⁶

They do not have coadjutor brothers but women to keep house for them. When I have visited the province I will inform you about the question of women in our residences. The property on which the parish church and the house of the missionaries is, has about 200 meters by 50, that is about a hectare [approximately two and a half acres] of surface and it belongs to the congregation. There is also a house and a school for girls in the parish. They had the intention of placing the Daughters of Charity there but Father Burlando found that they would be too near the missionaries and he did not agree to it. They put the Sisters of Mercy there. I think that Father Burlando exaggerated the danger.

³⁶Pius G. Kreuz died 30 January 1897. He had entered as a lay brother and was eventually ordained to the priesthood.

Since the present dwelling of the priests has been found to be too small, they are planning to build another one, also next to the church. Basically this little house is not a formed house [that is, one with at least three members]. The confreres have thought that they belonged to the real house at Germantown, but this is rather more a fiction of law than a reality. The two houses are separated from each other by about ten minutes and the confreres are not able to take part in any community activity. It seems to me that it would be better to have a formed house. They were wrong to place the house so far from the church and they hoped that the two would become one. On the one hand perhaps this is better for the seminary and the students.

Three of the missionaries of the central house (Saint Vincent) are assigned to give missions wherever they are called. It is also desirable that instead of three there be four or five since the missions are very crowded. At times five, ten, and fifteen thousand penitents show up and one person could not hear them all, even in a month. It is to be desired, therefore, that in place of one band there be several. In general I believe that the missions are not appreciated enough, and the parishes and the seminaries too much.

It seems to me that I have given you a fairly clear idea of the state of the central house. If you want more details you have only to let me know. I would also be very happy to know if my report on Ireland is what you have been awaiting from me, or if you want something else.

I stop here and finish by offering you my most respectful regards and by beseeching you to believe me to be your completely devoted and submissive child.

M. J. Maller

unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission

Section II
United States
Visit of Father Maller, 1878
Report on the State of the Province of the United States
in 1877-1878.

The province of the United States, or what is now the province of the United States, was in the beginning only some houses dependent on the province of Rome. These houses were erected into a province

only in 1835 or 1836.³⁷ The late Father [John] Timon was the first visitor; he later became bishop of Buffalo.³⁸ Until 1840 the only important house was the Barrens, in which there were a great number of confreres of different nationalities: Italians, French, Irish, German, Spanish, and Americans. This mixture and the impossibility of giving enough work to each confrere caused some small problems. Criticism, complaints, divisions, and factions soon made the Community less than edifying. The visitor believed it necessary to forbid criticism "in virtue of holy obedience."

In 1841, divine providence seemed to open the door to a cure. At first the bishop of Philadelphia, and then the bishops of New York, Cincinnati, and Bardstown offered our Congregation the direction of their seminaries, and Father Timon hastened to accept their kind offers.³⁹

The seminaries came under the guidance of the Missionaries. For one or other reason, this undertaking did not succeed. Three of these four seminaries, New York, Cincinnati, and Bardstown, were abandoned in less than two years. The Philadelphia seminary remained ours somewhat longer, 1841 to 1853, but then it was abandoned, not because of any insults or failure to come to an agreement with the bishop, but only because Father [Thaddeus] Amat, the superior, became a bishop, and Father [Anthony] Penco, the visitor,⁴⁰ said he had no confrere to replace Amat as superior, and so he removed the Missionaries. I must say, by the way, that Father Penco was not well inspired, and that the province experienced a great loss in losing that seminary, which was one of the most important in the United States. Since then, this seminary has become even more important. It looks like the present archbishop would like to offer it to us once again.

When the confreres who had been gathered in too great numbers at the Barrens were dispersed, the evil was lessened, but not successfully destroyed entirely, since the Missionaries took the spirit of division elsewhere. Two main parties, called the Italian and the Irish

³⁷The date was 2 September 1835.

³⁸John Timon (1797-1867) was provincial from the foundation of the province until 8 November 1846. He was nominated the first bishop of Buffalo, 23 April 1847, where he died 16 April 1867.

³⁹On the history of these and other seminaries, see Stafford Poole, C.M., "Ad Cleri Disciplinam: The Vincentian Seminary Apostolate in the United States," in *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815-1817*, John E. Rybolt, C.M., ed. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1988), 102-26.

⁴⁰Anthony Penco served as visitor from 23 September 1850 to 29 June 1857. During the last year and a half of that period, however, he was absent on family business in Italy, and John Masnou and J. Francis Burlando acted in his stead.

parties, dominated completely. There was even a trace of a German party. I never heard people speak of a French or American party. When I became visitor, someone said: "We will soon have a Spanish party," but that never happened. The American confreres joined the Irish, and those of other nationalities joined the Italians. This split, with rare exceptions, has lasted up to the present.

Here now are what seem to be the relative tendencies of the two parties. In general, we may say that they represent progressive and conservative tendencies. This is not to say that there are no individual exceptions. I am speaking in general of party as party. I understand that there is both bad and good in both sides. Also, a partisan spirit is ever blind and causes things to be understood quite differently, and often unjustly. Often, too, zeal for regularity on the one side and for prosperity on the other are mixed up with ambitious, personal, and partisan pretensions. As a result, the party which we might call the youth party holds that only the Americans or the Irish can appreciate the spirit of the country and can turn their natural ardor to the good of religion and of the Congregation. This basically means: "give us a visitor and local superiors from our numbers."

My visit revived both fears and hopes. I listened to the complaints, not against the spirit of Father Rolando whom they all agree in admiring for his piety, but because he seems incapable. He has a good spirit, but is timid, indecisive, changeable, and agrees with the last person who speaks to him. He is completely incapable in temporal matters. This is why this party says that they will be satisfied only when they have all the administration in their own hands. The better ones could manage, and the simpler ones just talk about it.

The others say that the spirit of piety, simplicity, and regularity is being lost little by little. Dissipation, independence and a worldly spirit is taking its place. There is too much happening with seculars. There is too much visiting, smoking and drinking. This is the source of the recent scandals, the loss of vocations, and sometimes the embarrassment of the Congregation. All this, they say, comes from the modern spirit which these gentlemen wish to introduce. And you can see, they continue, in the measure that that party takes the ground, we lose the spirit of the past, and we are drowning in this modern spirit. We have to oppose it, therefore.

Now, what to think, what to say, what to do? Some say: "We must be strong and not give in. These gentlemen are not as powerful as they seem. If we give in, they will grow bolder; but if we resist them, they

will become more threatening." In fact, a good superior, although not of their number, would support them, at least in what regards civility. Yet it seems to me that submission to an unloved authority, and a submission which is even more submissive, is unsatisfactory and cannot endure forever. It could be only temporary and transitional. Besides, the number of Missionaries from overseas is growing smaller day by day. Despite everything, the Irish and the Americans will soon have to take possession of complete authority. Consequently, if we sustain the authority of others, we will only be postponing temporarily the transformation already taking place.

Others among the best thinkers suggest another cure, a very good one at that, which could be the only cure for the evil: to build up the conservative party by sending some Missionaries from France, Italy, Spain, Germany, etc. This is, they say, the system followed by other European communities, who always have a good number of European members to dominate the Anglo-Irish element.⁴¹ But could we count on them? The visitor, acting with the consent of the superior general, will have to consider this. To me, the matter is very difficult. It would always be good to do something, if only to encourage this kind of emigration.

Debts

As you will see below in the section on individual houses, there is reason for astonishment at the enormous debts of some houses. Three of them run the risk of a sad and shameful disaster, since their debts are much greater than the value of what they own, or at least of what they could realize from a forced sale. They are Niagara, Brooklyn and Chicago. The Saint Louis house is scarcely in better shape. If the other houses were better off, they might come to their aid, but the rest of the houses, at least the most important ones, are themselves burdened. As a result, the houses of Germantown, the Barrens, Cape Girardeau and the two in New Orleans are in debt, if not enough to be frightening, at least enough so that they cannot help the others. Should it happen that their creditors fall on them, whether out of need, since they might be pushed by their own creditors, or out of lack of confidence or some other reason, a catastrophic bankruptcy would be, humanly speaking, inevitable. This could happen to us any day at all.

⁴¹This expression, "Anglo-Irish," doubtlessly refers to English-speaking Americans and Irish rather than to immigrants from England and Ireland.

We had an alarm like this last November, when Father [Thomas] Burke, the superior of the house in Saint Louis, died. Fortunately Father [Edmund] Hennessy, his assistant, acted so well that confidence, which had been shaken, was strengthened and everyone calmed down. This may be all right for this one time, but who will manage it if it happens again? It must be said that nearly everyone in the United States has debts. The archbishop of Saint Louis [Peter Richard Kenrick] told me that to find out how rich someone is, one must consider less what he has than what he owes. All the bishops have sizable debts; one owes half a million dollars, another a million dollars or more (a dollar is worth about twenty-five francs). Thus, it is no shame to have debts, but this also makes their indebtedness more dangerous, since the failure of one person could bring about the failure of several others. It is still true that, in general, very large debts which one might call consolidated, are put into investments in some immovable good which pays interest, such that other investments are in no danger with the courts. Yet honor, and perhaps conscience, are not so free and easy, and I keep wondering how the visitors and superiors understand this when they venture to contract debts which they may never be able to repay.

Even without considering justice, conscience, and honor, there is in this system something very disadvantageous, especially when debts are huge. They find themselves unable to pay yearly interest, and so they are forced to pay compound interest, if the debtor agrees. The superiors and procurators are so burdened and pestered that they lose their interior spirit and sometimes even their health. Likewise, the visitor sees himself obliged to tolerate the eccentricities of a certain superior or procurator, since they are capable men and the house needs them. As the archbishop of Saint Louis told me, no one goes to the galleys for complaining about a bishop in debt. He knew this by experience.

It is true that this state of affairs did not begin during the administration of the current visitor. Yet the situation has taken over and I doubt whether he can fix it. I think he must: (1) absolutely forbid any new debts or increase any already existing ones; (2) during his visitations to the houses, examine carefully the financial status of the house, and if the visitor cannot do it himself, he should get the help of the provincial procurator or some other capable confrere worthy of his confidence. Otherwise the local procurators are ready enough to have him "see blue," as they say. (3) The houses which do not have debts

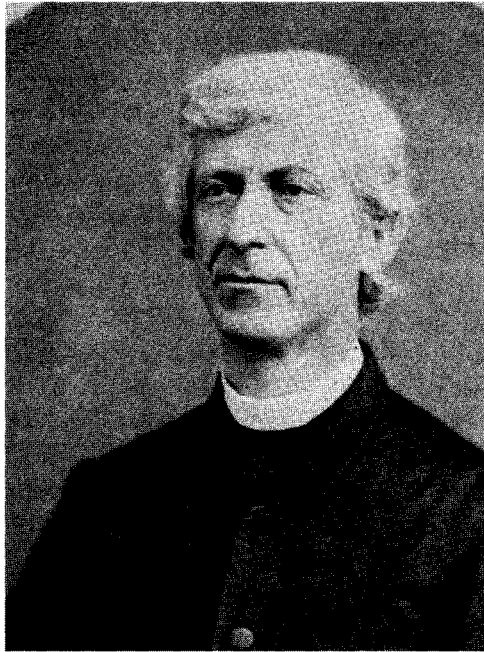
should help those which do, and those which can get out of debt by themselves should do so, and go to the help of the less fortunate. Otherwise the houses of Niagara, Chicago and Brooklyn will not escape for ten, fifteen or twenty years. The present visitor, supported by the authority of the superior general, who should encourage him and help him out in his need, would still have a chance of success. If he were well informed about the condition of each house, he could oblige the superiors to pay attention to it, and could oblige the procurators to keep good financial records. In this matter there has been deplorable negligence in some houses, notably Saint Louis, and even more in Niagara, as will be seen below.

The Question of Smoking

The decree of the general assembly of 1843 which forbids smoking has never been seriously put into effect in the United States.⁴² People complained since the beginning and are no more disposed today to put it into practice. One might even wonder if there is not already a contrary legal prescription. First, as soon as the decree was communicated to them, several conscientious Missionaries asked and received a dispensation from the superior general. The reason they alleged was that smoking was necessary for their health, on the advice or even the orders of their physician. The less scrupulous continued to smoke all the same, some in secret, some out in the open. The different visitors did not think they had the strength to stop it, and today hardly anyone remembers that there is a decree.

In this matter, there is no party. Both sides are unanimous. They all find that this decree should not exist, at least for the United States. They say: "First, there is no *a priori* reason, since smoking is indifferent in itself." If it is objected that it is a question of bad form, they reply that there is more to be said, and meanwhile it is often permitted in Europe. If we say that the world regards smoking as less convenient than taking snuff, they say that this could be so in Europe, but in the United States it is just the opposite. Taking snuff is done less than

⁴²Maller mistakenly cited the 1843 assembly instead of 1861. This assembly restated old prohibitions against the use of tobacco, dating as far back as 1692. It was clear, however, that Jean-Baptiste Étienne acknowledged the generalized use of tobacco by the confreres. In his circular letter of 8 April 1851, he wrote: "The house... is responsible with furnishing them [the Vincentians] with office supplies, toiletries, tobacco," etc. (See *Recueil des principales circulaires*, 3: 178). In his official response to the assembly of 1861, however, he branded the use of tobacco as "unknown in the Company," and forbade its use everywhere (*ibid.*, 337).



Reverend James Rolando, C.M.
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smoking cigars. Everyone smokes in the United States, priests, bishops, religious of every order, Jesuits, Redemptorists, Dominicans, etc., etc. What reason could there be to forbid it for Lazarists?⁴³ The youngest and boldest of the progressive party say that this is only a European caprice that is being imposed. "If smoking were the habit among the French clergy, they would not bother us here." And if someone asks me in good faith the reason for the prohibition, I just repeat the saying: "He who smokes, drinks." And then he tells me "This saying must have many exceptions, since we see everyone smoking, but not everyone drinks to excess." But the fact is that there is a great penchant for drinking in general, whether this comes from smoking or not.

I spoke to the visitor about smoking, and he said that it might be prohibited in public but tolerated in private, limiting the number of times each day. I see no great advantage in giving in like this. First, they smoke after meals and during recreation with more satisfaction, to say nothing of sensuality. This would thus mean permitting each

⁴³Lazarists is the traditional term for Vincentians; the latter name was introduced from Ireland and became general in the United States about 1900.

one to go to his own room and leave recreation, at least for the majority. To forbid smoking after meals would go against the customs of the country and, according to them, against hygiene. I have reason to believe that this limitation would soon end up like the decree of the assembly, a dead letter.

I truly do not know what to advise in this matter. If among our Missionaries there were a little more piety, prayer and mortification, this all would be easy to arrange. But I regret to report that our American confreres are not generally distinguished by these things. They work hard, are generous, devoted to their work and zealous for good, but they are too dissipated. Reforms in themselves, however, are always hard to introduce.

Silence⁴⁴

Except for the central house at Germantown, it is hard to see that there is a rule of silence. All our houses are either parishes or colleges, and these two kinds of works involve too much contact with seculars to keep from breaking silence. Lack of silence comes from lack of recollection, and vice versa. I have seen from interior communications that dissipation is nearly universal.

Interior Communication⁴⁵

Except for the novices and students, no one or almost no one makes the internal communication more than once a year, and that happens during retreat. The visitors have often recommended it in their visitation ordinances, but the negligence has continued. Nevertheless, the superiors would be successful with their subjects if they took the trouble to exhort their subjects to do so. In general they have no zeal to further their spiritual advancement. All too often they are content to hold them to the material order of the rule, and so there we are!

⁴⁴*The Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission*, 8: 4, specify, among other things: "We should keep silent, then, except during recreation."

⁴⁵*The Common Rules*, 10: 11, prescribes that "Each one of us, therefore, should with complete openness and due reverence give an account of his conscience to the superior, or someone assigned by him, in the manner customary in the Congregation. We should do this every three months, especially when on retreat, and as often as the superior thinks necessary."

Women Housekeepers

The number of coadjutor brothers is completely insufficient, and it is difficult to hire men to replace them, and so women are hired to do the domestic work. This is regrettable, for although I find nothing publicly and openly evil, yet in their houses it has dawned on me that they are furnishing the public with reasons to talk, something they should absolutely avoid. And indeed the decrees of the general assemblies are very positive about this.⁴⁶ I feel obliged to add that I have not been able to respond to the reasons they gave me with the force I wanted, because they told me that even in France in some seminaries, religious women are employed. Since this seems even more difficult to deny, I could only reply that in France it is very difficult to find men to do this work. Half of the houses have women as housekeepers. They are, to be sure, the less important houses; the more important ones have brothers. It seems to me that they can and must observe the decrees of the assemblies, but France has to give an example of obedience. The visitor intends to do all he can to give brothers to all the houses. Yet the houses have to want them, and there does not seem to be any hurry to ask for them. I suspect that the main reasons for leaving them alone are that the women keep the house cleaner and cook better.

Missions

The work of the Missions, even though not developed as we might wish, has not been entirely neglected in the United States.

A list of missions given from 1873-1878 shows this. God has blessed them, as he always blesses missions wherever they are given. I think they could be even better if they were given more according to regulation, but with perhaps some small modifications if this were really needed. I have come to suspect these complaints about time and places, and sometimes they are exaggerated or even imaginary. Human respect is sometimes present. I see that we could free ourselves from this type of servitude more often than in the past. Anyhow, my advice is that the plan be sketched out with such modifications here

⁴⁶The decrees of the general assemblies of 1774, 1788, and 1829 generally prohibit the presence in community houses of "any women under any pretext whatsoever." See *Collectio completa decretorum conventuum generalium Congregationis Missionis* (Paris: 1882), 80-81.

and there as seem needed, and that afterwards the plan should be reviewed by the visitor and his council, and it could even be proposed for the approval of the superior general. In this way there would be less room for the arbitrary, the health of the confreres would be saved, and the Missions would surely not lose at all.

It seems indispensable that the number of missionaries should increase. Currently there are only three or four destined to give missions, the most important work of our holy vocation. There is only one small band for the missions in the entire extent of this huge republic, and yet the province has a good number of priests, about eighty. This means that they spend a large amount of time and money to move them from one place to another. For example, they give a mission near Boston, and they are then asked for another one in Saint Louis or New Orleans, some five or six hundred leagues [1500-1800 miles] from there. That is a waste of time despite the speed of communications nowadays, and it is a considerable expense which falls directly or indirectly on the Mission. They should therefore set up two or three bands or more: one for the west, another for the south and perhaps a fourth for California. The present mission band seems to be limited to the East. The visitor says he wants it, but he does not have enough men. I myself believe that with good will they could institute a second band next year, and could add in the following year one more and even some more after that. We must believe that God will send us more subjects, and that there is hope for the future. This nearly exclusive attention to parish work and teaching is perhaps the basic reason that the spirit of the province leaves much to be desired.

Relations Between Missionaries and Daughters of Charity⁴⁷

Whether by natural antipathy or by some other cause, the confreres in general did not like Father Burlando, and he repaid them in kind.⁴⁸ He was harsh especially against the Irish. Something shocking or disagreeable took place, and one of our men did not behave himself

⁴⁷A decree of the general assembly of 1874 instructed the superior general to draw up regulations based on *The Common Rules* (11: 11), and on the two circulars of Jean-Baptiste Étienne, dated 26 May 1844 and 1 November 1867. See *Collectio completa*, 138.

⁴⁸James Francis Burlando was the director of the Daughters of Charity, with headquarters in Emmitsburg, Maryland, from 1853 to 1873.

well in the presence of the Sisters or even scandalized them. For this reason, Father Burlando is said to have forbidden the Sisters nearly all except the most indispensable communication. He did not hide his preference that the Sisters go to confession to secular priests. Some Sister Servants more or less agreed. It must be said, however, that they were always in the minority and that these sentiments did not put down deep roots. It was not difficult for me to have them return and at the moment, that was the way it appeared. Interest in their vocation stood against a similar aberration. Poor Father [Felix] Guidry was a captive of this system.⁴⁹ It is even because of this that we may attribute the strange event which surprised everyone, when they learned that he had been appointed Director of the sisters after Father Burlando's death,⁵⁰ and on the latter's recommendation. He had nothing more than that, and had hardly any other basis for the sisters' esteem, and was so unpopular among the confreres! Humanly speaking, he could not keep from failing, and he failed completely.

All these things made the confreres complain, especially the Irish, that Father Burlando was wrong, he had exaggerated things, or people attributed exaggerations to him. Everyone understands this now after his death and relations have become friendly. They will improve more and more; and, provided our Missionaries do not make themselves less worthy, they will always be respected and loved by the sisters. I just wish that they would be a little better behaved, and would possess and show more piety. This is what should be especially urged on them. For the rest, they behave themselves well with the sisters, and they are devoted to helping them in their very important works. I have nothing but praise in this matter. The visitor, in agreement with the Director,⁵¹ does all he can to send confreres for their confessions and to give them retreats. We spoke about visiting them from time to time and giving them conferences, and he will do what he can, given the number of properly prepared missionaries.

These are my general remarks made before speaking of the establishments and the confreres in particular. I will probably return to them afterwards as conclusions to my special remarks about the houses and the individuals who make them up.

To be continued

⁴⁹Joseph Felix Guidry (sometimes spelled Guedry) succeeded Burlando as director, serving from 1873 to 1877.

⁵⁰He died 16 February 1873.

⁵¹Alexis Mandine succeeded Guidry as director in 1877, serving in that position until 1892.